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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

Reporting period from 6 November 2014 to 27 February 2015

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since my last report of 5 November 2014 (S/2014/784).

2. A serious breach of the cessation of hostilities between Lebanon and Israel occurred on 28 January, when Hizbullah launched several anti-tank guided missiles from the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) towards an Israeli military convoy south of the Blue Line in the vicinity of the Shab'a Farms area. Two Israeli soldiers were killed and several other soldiers and civilians injured in the attack. During subsequent fire by the Israel Defense Forces into Lebanon, a peacekeeper from UNIFIL was also killed, and the Security Council condemned his death in the strongest terms. Rockets were then fired from the UNIFIL area of operations and further shelling by the Israel Defense Forces ensued before the firing ceased. Hizbullah claimed responsibility for the attack, which it said had been in retaliation for an alleged Israeli airstrike on 18 January on the Golan in the Syrian Arab Republic, which killed six Hizbullah members and a high-ranking Iranian military officer. The immediate engagement with the parties by my Special Coordinator and the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, including through UNIFIL liaison and coordination arrangements, prevented further escalation and helped restore the cessation of hostilities. I addressed the developments directly with both Prime Minister Tammam Salam and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, calling for a return to calm and for all concerned to act responsibly. My Special Coordinator was also in contact with regional partners for their support in this regard. In spite of this serious violation, Israel and Lebanon reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and to the stability of the Blue Line area.

3. During the reporting period, the Lebanese Armed Forces continued to work robustly to contain threats emanating from extremist armed groups along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic. There has been continued violence in and around the town of Arsal, including car bombs and attacks on the Lebanese Armed Forces.

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Lebanese soldiers and security personnel continue to be held hostage near Arsal by the Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

4. There was a major terrorist attack targeting the Alawite community in Tripoli on 10 January, which caused a number of casualties. Cross-border shelling and shooting from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon continued, causing some injuries and material damage. There were also a number of airstrikes by Syrian government aircraft on Lebanese territory. The Lebanese Armed Forces reported continued smuggling of weapons across the Lebanese-Syrian border.

5. As a result of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Syrians continue to seek shelter in Lebanon. As at 1 February, there were over 1,168,000 Syrian refugees registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon, an increase of approximately 30,000 since my last report. However, there has been an overall decline in the number of refugees being registered as a result of new restrictions on entry into Lebanon. On 15 and 16 December, the Deputy Secretary-General visited Lebanon and jointly launched the Lebanon Response Crisis Plan for refugees and host communities with Prime Minister Salam.

6. The Cabinet of Prime Minister Salam has continued to govern within the constraints caused by the persistent vacuum in the presidency. There have been 19 sessions of Parliament to elect a new president, but owing to the lack of a quorum resulting from the absence of members of Parliament from the 8 March bloc, the parliamentary process has been blocked. Talks between representatives of the Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese Forces have not yet moved forward with respect to an agreement over a candidate. Following a vote by parliamentarians on 5 November to extend Parliament's mandate until 20 June 2017, the Constitutional Court upheld the legality of the vote in a decision on 30 November.

7. On 23 December, the Future Movement and Hizbullah initiated a dialogue under Speaker Nabih Berri's auspices aimed at measures, which, among other things, would lower tensions between the Sunni and Shia communities, and agreeing on a mechanism to elect a new president. Five sessions of the dialogue have now been held, which have led to agreement on steps to calm the situation on the ground, where necessary, and on the need for the authorities to conduct sensitive security operations. These include a raid on Roumieh prison and the implementation of a security plan for the northern Beqaa, which is now under way.

8. On 31 December, the Secretary-General extended the mandate of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon for a period of three years from 1 March 2015, in accordance with resolution 1757 (2005).

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

9. A UNIFIL investigation was launched immediately to determine the facts and circumstances of the 28 January incidents. At the time of writing, the preliminary investigation had been completed and an interim investigation report shared with the parties. Preliminary information indicates that Hizbullah launched six anti-tank

guided missiles from the vicinity of Maysat village in the UNIFIL area of operations (Sector East) towards an Israel Defense Forces convoy approximately five kilometres south of the Blue Line in the vicinity of the Shab'a Farms area. Two Israeli soldiers were killed and seven Israeli soldiers and four civilians were injured in the attack, which destroyed three vehicles. The Israel Defense Forces retaliated with artillery and mortar rounds, which impacted in the areas of Arab el Louaize, near Ghajar, El Majidiye and Kafr Shuba (Sector East). During the course of retaliatory fire a UNIFIL peacekeeper in position 4-28 was killed.

10. Following Israeli retaliation, five rockets were fired from the UNIFIL area of operations in the vicinity of Kafr Shuba, impacting south of the Blue Line. The Israel Defense Forces responded anew with tank fire and artillery in the direction of Kafr Shuba. During the entire period, the Israel Defense Forces fired a total of approximately 90 rounds of 155 mm artillery, 28 rounds of mortar and 5 tank rounds. The preliminary investigation by UNIFIL also showed that this retaliation included 20 white phosphorus mortar shells. UNIFIL personnel also reported mortar fire from the east of United Nations position 4-7C in the UNIFIL area of operations, but this could not be confirmed. There were no reports of further casualties. The escalation was contained and fire ceased on both sides shortly thereafter. This violence constituted violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of the cessation of hostilities. UNIFIL remained closely engaged with both the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces as events developed, urging both sides to exercise maximum restraint in order to avoid any further escalation of the situation and restore the cessation of hostilities.

11. In a statement on 28 January, Hizbullah claimed responsibility for the attack on the Israeli military convoy that it attributed to its "Quneitra martyrs group" in reference to the 18 January alleged Israeli airstrike against Hizbullah elements and a high-ranking Iranian military officer in the Golan. In a letter dated 28 January (S/2015/58), the Permanent Representative of Israel urged the Security Council to condemn Hizbullah, calling for it to be disarmed and for the Government of Lebanon to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006). In a letter dated 29 January (A/69/754-S/2015/69), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon stressed that his Government was committed to the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) in their entirety and called on the Security Council to condemn Israel's "bombardment of Lebanon" as a flagrant violation of resolution 1701 (2006).

12. The incident of 28 January and Hizbullah's claim of responsibility demonstrated that unauthorized weapons are present in the UNIFIL area of operations in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). The Lebanese Armed Forces has primary responsibility for ensuring at all times that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River is free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006). In accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL does not proactively search for weapons in the south. UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, takes immediate action within all means and capabilities available in its mandate and to the full extent provided for in its rules of engagement, when specific information is received regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel or weapons inside its area of operations. Under its mandate, UNIFIL cannot enter or search private property unless there is credible evidence of a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), including an imminent threat of hostile activity from that location.

13. In addition, UNIFIL observed several instances of persons carrying unauthorized weapons in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). On 16 January, one man was carrying a pistol in Deir Mimess (Sector West). On 20 January, UNIFIL observed two men, each carrying an AK-47 assault rifle, in Tyre (Sector West). On the same day, in Sarda (Sector East), two men were spotted with two AK-47 rifles, while apparently providing security for a convoy of vehicles. In all cases, UNIFIL alerted the Lebanese Armed Forces.

14. Presumed hunting weapons also were seen by UNIFIL, but a decrease in the number of civilians carrying hunting weapons south of the Litani River was noted since the last report. In order to curb this activity, the Lebanese Armed Forces issued a public statement on 25 November reminding the local population of the ban against carrying hunting weapons south of the Litani River. UNIFIL patrols continued to inform the Lebanese Armed Forces when hunters were observed.

15. Since my last report, Israel violated Lebanese airspace almost daily, mostly with unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL protested the violations to the Israel Defense Forces and called upon the Government of Israel to stop the overflights immediately. The Government of Lebanon also protested these violations of Lebanese sovereignty. However, the Government of Israel continued to claim that the overflights were necessary for the security of the country.

16. Israel also continued to occupy northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty. UNIFIL received no response from Israel to its proposal, submitted to both parties in 2011, concerning security arrangements aimed at facilitating the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the area. The Lebanese Armed Forces conveyed in July 2011 its approval of the proposal.

17. Most ground violations of the Blue Line were perpetrated by farmers or shepherds for short periods of time in the vicinity of Shab'a, Kafr Shuba, Bastara, Blida, El Majidiye (Sector East) and Rumaysh (Sector West). In some cases, the shepherds, along with their flocks, stayed south of the Blue Line for several hours.

18. In a few cases, violations of the Blue Line were perpetrated by young men, at times armed, in civilian attire or indistinguishable military uniforms, climbing on top of Blue Line barrels. UNIFIL expressed concern to the Lebanese authorities at such activities, which also involved moving close to the Blue Line and monitoring the southern side of the Blue Line with Global Positioning System (GPS) devices, binoculars and professional cameras.

19. UNIFIL generally enjoyed full freedom of movement throughout its area of operations. There were two serious incidents during the period in which UNIFIL patrols were assaulted by men with unauthorized weapons. On 30 December, in Ramyah (Sector West), a UNIFIL patrol was assaulted by a group of approximately 15 civilians bearing pistols and a twin-barrel gun, after they had been observed violating the Blue Line by climbing on a Blue Line barrel. The group removed some UNIFIL equipment. UNIFIL vehicles arriving to provide reinforcement to the patrol were blocked about 100 metres away by another group of around 20 civilians, armed with pistols, knives and sticks. One man who was trying forcefully to enter a UNIFIL vehicle threatened a peacekeeper by holding a knife to his throat, while

others threatened the patrol with pistols. UNIFIL fired a warning shot, upon which the mob dispersed from the scene. To date, the equipment has not been returned.

20. On 23 January in Marwahin (Sector West), two armed men in civilian vehicles overtook and blocked a UNIFIL military police vehicle and used their pistols to repeatedly hit the vehicle, demanding a camera that they alleged the UNIFIL personnel had used. More vehicles, carrying approximately 15 men, most of them armed, arrived at the scene. As the UNIFIL military police officer attempted to call UNIFIL headquarters, the group snatched his cell phone, ransacked the vehicle, cut the radio wire and stole a number of items, including a radar speed gun, a camera and a cell phone. UNIFIL protested these incidents to the Lebanese authorities and requested that all incidents be investigated and their perpetrators held accountable.

21. In addition, UNIFIL patrols encountered four instances of aggressive behaviour. On 21 November, a group of seven youths threw stones at the vehicles of a UNIFIL patrol at Majda Zun (Sector West). On 8 December, the leader of a UNIFIL patrol was approached in Hallusiyat Al Fawqa (Sector West) by a group of civilians who took away his GPS device. The device was later returned to UNIFIL. On 28 December near Ayta ash-Shab (Sector West), a GPS device was snatched from a UNIFIL patrol by two men passing on an unregistered motorbike. On 20 January, a military laptop used for navigational purposes was stolen from a UNIFIL patrol during a confrontation with a group of civilians near Yatar (Sector West). The Lebanese Armed Forces intervened and escorted the UNIFIL patrol out of the village.

22. The Force's freedom of movement was obstructed on two additional occasions. On 28 November, a UNIFIL foot patrol was denied access along a road close to Majda Zun (Sector West) by three civilians in a vehicle with a satellite phone. On 29 December, a UNIFIL vehicle patrol was denied access along a road close to Ash Sh'aytiyah (Sector West) by a group of civilians in cars and on scooters.

23. The aforementioned incidents notwithstanding, the relations of the Force with the local population remained largely positive. The Mission, in coordination with, among others, international and Lebanese non-governmental organizations, undertook regular outreach and liaison activities, including medical and dental assistance to the population, as well as road safety programmes for schoolchildren and veterinary services. UNIFIL continued to implement and monitor quick-impact projects in support of its mandate, including projects undertaken by troop-contributing countries.

24. On 30 December, an Israel Defense Forces tank pointed its main gun at and tracked a foot patrol from Observer Group Lebanon along the banks of the Wazzani River. On 14 January in Houla (Sector East), three Israel Defense Forces soldiers threw stones at two Lebanese civilians, who were taking pictures southward of the Blue Line.

25. The Lebanese Armed Forces protested an incident that reportedly occurred on 18 January in Ayta ash-Shab (Sector West), in which one Israel Defense Forces soldier allegedly activated smoke or tear gas grenades near the technical fence. The Lebanese Armed Forces said that the smoke had drifted towards Lebanese personnel positioned north of the Blue Line and caused respiratory problems among the

soldiers. UNIFIL did not observe the incident, but conducted an investigation that was inconclusive.

26. The strength of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River remained at approximately two brigades. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued their reinforcement in the vicinity of Shab'a village and the Arkoub area (Sector East).

27. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued to carry out their daily coordinated activities between the Blue Line and the Litani River. UNIFIL conducted on average 11,600 activities (patrols, checkpoints and observation tasks) monthly, including operations carried out in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces.

28. As at 1 January, UNIFIL had carried out 348 joint or coordinated exercises with the Lebanese Armed Forces, including 160 training activities and 12 sea exercises conducted by the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force with the Lebanese Navy.

29. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force continued to carry out its dual mandate of conducting maritime interdiction operations and training the Lebanese Armed Forces. Since the last report, the Maritime Task Force hailed 1,285 ships, and the Lebanese Navy and Customs officials inspected 278 vessels to verify that there were no unauthorized arms or related materiel on board.

30. There were several incidents at sea that had the potential to raise tensions between the parties. On 20 January, UNIFIL observed an Israel Defense Forces patrol boat inside Lebanese territorial waters, 1,500 metres north of the line of buoys. The maritime border between Israel and Lebanon is disputed and UNIFIL has no mandate to monitor the line of buoys, which was installed unilaterally by the Government of Israel and is not recognized by the Government of Lebanon. On 13 January, two divers from a Lebanese Armed Forces patrol boat briefly entered the water from the north near the line of buoys. Subsequently, Israel Defense Forces divers visited the same general area, south of the line of buoys. The Israel Defense Forces protested this activity to UNIFIL, which in turn informed the Lebanese Armed Forces. On several occasions, Israel Defense Forces patrol boats pointed searchlights or launched flares at fishing boats in Lebanese waters. On 8 December, several Israel Defense Forces patrol boats fired automatic weapons when a Lebanese fishing boat was present 1,000 metres north of the line of buoys.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

31. UNIFIL continued to make extensive use of its liaison and coordination arrangements with the parties, including during times of crisis. Following the exchange of fire on 28 January between Hizbullah and the Israel Defense Forces, UNIFIL, through those arrangements and its deployment on the ground, helped to defuse the situation. The liaison and coordination arrangements constitute the basis for safeguarding the cessation of hostilities, ensuring full respect for the Blue Line and promoting security and stability in southern Lebanon in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The parties continued to engage constructively with UNIFIL at the tactical, operational and strategic levels, as well as in tripartite and bilateral settings. There was no progress towards establishing a UNIFIL liaison office in Tel Aviv.

32. The foremost mechanism for addressing all security and military operational issues related to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) remained the tripartite forum, chaired by the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, with the participation of representatives of the Israel Defense Forces and Lebanese Armed Forces.

33. Since my last report, tripartite meetings took place on 17 December and 4 February. During tripartite discussions, both parties acknowledged the importance of keeping the Blue Line stable in the context of broader regional security concerns and the possibility for localized incidents to spread rapidly. The first meeting was focused on Israeli allegations of Hizbullah activities near the Blue Line, ground violations of the Blue Line, particularly in the disputed Shab'a Farms area, and Israeli air violations. Discussions at the second meeting centred on the developments surrounding the 28 January incident and ways to strengthen the cessation of hostilities to avoid future such incidents.

34. UNIFIL completed its investigations into the 5 October shooting incident at the Blue Line and the 7 October incident, in which an Israel Defense Forces vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device south of the Blue Line, and shared its findings with both parties.

35. UNIFIL continued the process of visibly marking the Blue Line. As at 9 February, out of a total of 527 markers assessed for the entire length of the Blue Line, 313 were agreed by both parties. Of the 313 agreed points, UNIFIL has cleared access lanes to 312 points from mines and unexploded ordnance, measured 241 points, constructed 229 points and verified 208 points.

36. UNIFIL continued to facilitate the capacity-building of the Lebanese Armed Forces for tasks mandated under resolution 1701 (2006) in the area of operations, through its strategic dialogue mechanism with the Lebanese Armed Forces. The strategic dialogue plan is an integral part of the capabilities development plan of the Lebanese Armed Forces and complements the efforts of the International Support Group to bolster the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

C. Disarming armed groups

37. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the Lebanese State, in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006) continues to restrict the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In the 28 January incident, these arms were used in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and in breach of the cessation of hostilities. During the reporting period, Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah reiterated publicly that Hizbullah had substantial and sophisticated military capacity separate from that of the Lebanese State, which it claims serves as a deterrent against potential aggression from Israel. There were no meetings of the National Dialogue during the reporting period and no other formal discussion of arms outside the control of the State.

38. The security situation continued to be unstable in the eastern Beqaa, in and around the town of Arsal. A soldier was killed and two were wounded by a car bomb on 3 December. Another car bomb exploded, injuring a number of civilians on

8 December. The Lebanese Armed Forces successfully defused four other car bombs in Arsal during the reporting period.

39. Elsewhere, arms outside the control of the State continued to proliferate and undermine stability. For example, on 21 December, the Jaafar clan clashed with residents of Deir al Ahmar in the eastern Beqaa region. On 10 January, a personal dispute ended with a fatal shooting attack in Kfardebian. On 19 January, a soldier was wounded pursuing criminals in Baalbek. As a result of the proliferation of small arms there have been frequent incidents of "celebratory" gunfire associated with political speeches and events, which caused injury. There continue to be reports of political parties supporting the formation and arming of self-defence groups in local communities living in border areas.

40. Within Lebanon, there was a reduction in the number of terrorist attacks during the reporting period as a result of the efforts of the Lebanese Armed Forces and security personnel to prevent such attacks. In Tripoli, the Lebanese Armed Forces continued to implement the security plan, leading to relative calm, which was broken on 10 January by a double-suicide bombing, reflecting the continued impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. That attack, claimed by the Nusra Front, targeted the Alawite community of Jabal Mohsen and killed 9 people and injured 37 others. Efforts by local leaders contributed to the lowering of tensions and prevention of retaliatory violence on neighbouring communities. Following the attack, the Internal Security Forces successfully conducted an unprecedented operation on 12 January to disrupt a terrorist communication network in Roumieh prison.

41. There has been no progress on the dismantling of military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada. In 2006, it was decided in the National Dialogue that the bases should be dismantled. The existence of the bases continues to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and impede the ability of the State to monitor and control effectively parts of the Lebanese-Syrian border.

42. The Palestinian camps have been relatively quiet during the reporting period. On 24 November, a Syrian refugee woman was killed during a clash between armed gangs in the camp of Burj el Barajneh. The Joint Security Force, which has taken responsibility for security in Ein el-Helweh, has expanded and intervened on a number of occasions to keep calm in the camp. On 28 January, a Palestinian was killed in Ein el-Helweh, and the Joint Security Force deployed quickly to prevent further violence. During a visit to Lebanon on 20 January, a senior Palestinian official asserted the need to disassociate the Palestinian camps from regional developments and to maintain stability and security in them.

D. Arms embargo and border control

43. In its resolution 1701 (2006), the Security Council decided that all States should prevent the sale or the supply of arms and related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon, by their nationals or from their territories or using their flag vessels or aircraft. The Council also called upon the Government of Lebanon to secure its borders and other entry points so as to prevent the entry into Lebanon, without its consent, of arms and related materiel.

44. Representatives of the Government of Israel have consistently alleged that there are significant, ongoing arms transfers to Hizbullah across the Lebanese-Syrian border. The United Nations takes these concerns seriously, but is not currently in a position to verify them independently. Representatives of the Government of Israel have continued to express concern at the prospect of the transfer of advanced weapons systems to Hizbullah. In a letter dated 12 December (S/2014/878), Israel communicated to the Security Council concerns at reports of Hizbullah's military capability and supply. Hizbullah leaders have openly stated their readiness to use their military capabilities against Israel in the event of attack by Israel, including with reference to the reported Israeli airstrike against Hizbullah elements in the Golan on 18 January. I expressed concern about the potential consequences of that incident as a reflection of the impact of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon, and called on all concerned to act responsibly to prevent any escalation, in full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in the region and adherence to relevant Security Council resolutions.

45. The Lebanese Armed Forces deployed in border areas to counter the movement of armed elements between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic and successfully repulsed infiltration attempts by armed fighters. On 1 December, six Lebanese soldiers were killed and one was wounded in a clash with militants near Ras Baalbek. A further clash on 23 January in the same location left eight soldiers dead and a number wounded.

46. The Lebanese Armed Forces and security services have detained a number of Syrians during the reporting period, including members of ISIL, the Nusra Front and the Free Syrian Army. On 6 December, the detention was confirmed of two women related to ISIL figures who are believed to be holding some of the abducted Lebanese soldiers and security personnel. There has been no progress in efforts to negotiate the release of the 26 hostages held by the Nusra Front and by ISIL, and the killing of a fourth hostage was announced on 5 December.

47. During the reporting period, there was an overall decline in the number of incidents of cross-border fire from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon. There were over 40 incidents of shooting, 7 incidents of cross-border shelling and 16 rockets, causing a number of injuries and material damage. There were at least four airstrikes by Syrian government aircraft.

48. Hizbullah continued to publicly acknowledge its continued involvement in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic. The funerals of Hizbullah fighters continued to be held during the reporting period. Other Lebanese individuals are reported to have joined groups fighting the Syrian regime, including the Nusra Front and ISIL.

49. Infiltration attempts and attacks on Lebanese Armed Forces positions in areas by the border with the Syrian Arab Republic illustrate the need for greater capability for the Lebanese Armed Forces to defend Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The agreement for $3 billion of assistance provided by Saudi Arabia in cooperation with France was finalized during the reporting period. The disbursement of the additional $1 billion pledged by Saudi Arabia in August 2014 is reportedly on track to deliver urgently needed capability to the Lebanese Armed Forces and security forces in the course of this year. Other bilateral partners continue to provide vital, immediate capability to support the Lebanese Armed Forces.

50. As at 12 February, over 1,168,000 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR in Lebanon in 1,170 communities across the country, including 54,846 in the UNIFIL area of operations. The Government of Lebanon has initiated a series of measures to restrict the flow of refugees into Lebanon. On 31 December, the General Security Directorate of the Ministry of Interior issued a new set of regulations whereby refugees would not be admitted to Lebanon except for exceptional humanitarian reasons based on criteria that are to be developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Security procedures and curfews imposed on refugees increased across the country, and there has been an increase in the number of evictions of Syrian refugees from their dwellings, mostly carried out by the Lebanese Armed Forces owing to their proximity to military bases. Harsh winter conditions have caused a number of fatalities from hypothermia among refugees.

51. The predicament of women and children refugees has worsened as a result of their prolonged displacement, making them vulnerable to early marriage, prostitution and sex in exchange for assistance, instances of which reportedly are on the rise. Only 24 per cent of the 402,000 Syrian children of primary school age in Lebanon are now enrolled in formal education.

52. On 15 December, the Government of Lebanon and international partners launched the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan for the period 2015-2016. This joint plan aims to ensure humanitarian assistance and protection for refugees and vulnerable host communities, while maintaining and developing the capacity of national and local delivery systems to provide equal access to and ensure the quality of basic public services.

53. There are approximately 44,000 Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic in Lebanon. Their number has been stable since the restrictions imposed on their entry by the Government of Lebanon in May 2014. The restrictions continue to result in the denial of entry to all but a handful of Palestine refugees fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic and those refugees have faced increasing restrictions on renewing their legal status in Lebanon since May 2014.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

54. Six manual mine clearance teams, one explosive ordnance disposal team and one mechanical mine clearance team from UNIFIL, validated by the United Nations Mine Action Service, were deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations during the reporting period. UNIFIL cleared more than 216 square metres of hazardous areas to provide access to Blue Line points and found and destroyed two anti-personnel landmines. The team conducted 3 training support events, 20 quality assurance visits of operational sites and 7 explosive ordnance awareness training programmes.

55. The Lebanese Mine Action Centre reported that, from 1 September to 31 December 2014, it had cleared 543,603 square metres of hazardous areas, mainly battle areas, and destroyed 629 cluster munition items, one anti-personnel mine and 41 unexploded ordnances.

F. Delineation of borders

56. No progress was made towards the delineation or demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian border during the reporting period, including in areas where it is uncertain or disputed, as called for in Security Council resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). Extending the authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout all Lebanese territory and enabling the Lebanese security forces and Lebanese Armed Forces to secure borders to prevent the entry of arms or related materiel necessitates the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic as soon as practicable.

57. There has also been no progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms. There has still been no reaction from either Israel or the Syrian Arab Republic to the provisional definition of that area contained in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641).

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

58. UNIFIL continuously reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures and carried out three security awareness exercises for its personnel during the reporting period. Force protection works to upgrade installations and assets are ongoing. Cooperation continued between UNIFIL and the Lebanese authorities in ensuring that all security threats are addressed appropriately. More stringent security measures were introduced on 15 December within a selected area of Sector East of the UNIFIL area of operations, whereby all official missions of the United Nations must be coordinated and escorted by UNIFIL security personnel. In addition, in the aftermath of recent incidents, UNIFIL reviewed its security procedures, plans and actions. On 28 January, a general restriction of movement in the UNIFIL area of operations was implemented for that day for UNIFIL and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

59. UNIFIL continued to monitor proceedings at the Lebanese Military Court against individuals suspected of planning or perpetrating serious attacks against UNIFIL peacekeepers. In the case of a serious attack in 2007 against peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent, one of the suspected perpetrators was arrested and is currently under investigation. In the case of a serious attack perpetrated in 2008, the next hearing at the Military Court of Appeal is scheduled to take place on 17 March 2015. In three cases of serious attacks perpetrated in 2011, the investigation is ongoing. In a case of terror intent opened in January 2014, a hearing at the Permanent Military Court is scheduled to take place on 10 July 2015.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

60. As at 9 February, the total military strength of UNIFIL stood at 10,171, including 366 women from 37 troop-contributing countries. The civilian component consisted of 278 international and 607 national staff, including 82 and 156 women, respectively. A total of 59 military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, including 3 women, are also part of UNIFIL. UNIFIL is

working to increase the number of civilian and military women deployed, with a view to reducing the gender imbalance in the mission.

61. There are 57 operational positions in the area of operations. On 18 December, Belgium withdrew its multi-role engineering company, which consisted of approximately 100 personnel. On 10 February, 146 Fijian troops, who were formerly part of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, joined UNIFIL, at United Nations position 2-45.

V. Observations

62. I condemn the attack on an Israeli military convoy on 28 January, claimed by Hizbullah, which killed two Israeli soldiers and injured several others. This attack constitutes a serious violation of the cessation of hostilities between Lebanon and Israel, and of the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). Hizbullah's hostile activity from the UNIFIL area of operations is in direct contravention of resolution 1701 (2006), including the provision that there should be no armed personnel, assets or weapons in the area other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL.

63. Retaliatory fire by Israel into Lebanon is in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of the cessation of hostilities, and does not conform to the United Nations expectations that the parties will notify UNIFIL of an incident and will refrain from responding, except where clearly required in immediate self-defence. I condemn the killing of a United Nations peacekeeper, which resulted from retaliatory fire by the Israel Defense Forces into Lebanon. This incident took place within a United Nations position, the coordinates of which are fully known to the Israel Defense Forces.

64. Violence will not bring peace to the people of Lebanon or Israel. I wish to recall the letter dated 12 August 2006 from the Secretary-General to the Prime Ministers of Israel and Lebanon, which set out the expectations of the United Nations of how all concerned would fulfil their obligations with respect to the cessation of hostilities, including the appendix to the letters, in which it is stated that the cessation of hostilities would be understood as no firing into the territory of or at the other side with any type of weapon from the ground, air or sea.

65. I also wish to recall that the identification of the Blue Line in 2000 was solely the responsibility of the United Nations for the practical purpose of confirming the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from Lebanon in compliance with resolution 425 (1978), without prejudice to future border agreements. Both sides, despite their respective reservations in 2000, undertook to respect the Blue Line as identified by the United Nations. I again urge both parties to do their utmost to prevent violations of the Blue Line. The Blue Line must be respected in its entirety.

66. I welcome the restoration of the cessation of hostilities following the incident. I take note that both the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel acted quickly to prevent further escalation and to emphasize their commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and to preserving the stability in the area. Yet the situation remains fragile. This fragility is compounded by the use of increasingly strident and bellicose rhetoric, warning of renewed conflict. The lessons learned from the 2006 conflict should serve as a cautionary reminder of the even more dangerous scale of

any renewed confrontation. All concerned therefore have a responsibility to avoid rhetoric that raises tensions and contravenes the spirit of resolution 1701 (2006).

67. In the current tense regional environment, and in the light of the multiple security challenges Lebanon faces as a result of the conflict in Syria, I am particularly concerned at the risk of miscalculation leading to a new conflict that neither of the parties nor the region can afford. It is imperative that all concerned refrain from any further action that could jeopardize the cessation of hostilities or destabilize the area and work to restore fully the calm across the Blue Line. I welcome the satisfaction expressed by both parties with the critical security and liaison role of UNIFIL in implementing resolution 1701 (2006), including to defuse any escalation from the recent incidents. I call on both parties to continue to use the established liaison and coordination arrangements to the full extent and work closely with UNIFIL in order to mitigate the risk of further violence. I further urge the parties to engage actively with my Special Coordinator for Lebanon and UNIFIL on measures to regain confidence.

68. The recent incidents are a strong reminder of the responsibility of both parties to fulfil their respective obligations and to make progress towards the full implementation of the objectives of resolution 1701 (2006). The incident underlines the necessity, for the safety of both the Lebanese and the Israeli people, for the parties to take advantage of periods of calm across the Blue Line to strengthen the cessation of hostilities by working towards a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the conflict, as envisaged in resolution 1701 (2006). This includes the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory so that it may exercise its full sovereignty and the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon so that there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese State. In line with resolution 1701 (2006), I urge the Lebanese authorities to take all actions to ensure that there are no unauthorized armed personnel, assets or weapons in the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River.

69. The violence on 28 January also underscores the need for progress with regard to the Shab'a Farms area in accordance with paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006). I call, once again, on the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel to submit their responses to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area that I provided in October 2007 (S/2007/641). I continue to encourage the parties to work with my Special Coordinator and UNIFIL to achieve these aims, including through progress on the Shab'a Farms area issue.

70. The continuing occupation of northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line by the Israel Defense Forces represents an ongoing violation of resolution 1701 (2006). Israel has an obligation to withdraw its armed forces from the area, in accordance with the resolution, and I urge the Israeli authorities to take steps to that end accordingly.

71. It is also a matter of serious concern that Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace on an almost daily basis. All Israeli overflights of Lebanon are violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty. At a time of heightened regional tensions, when the potential for escalation remains high, I call on both parties to maintain calm and stability along the Blue Line. I reiterate my call upon the Government of Israel to cease all overflights of Lebanese territory and Lebanese territorial waters.

72. I urge both parties to continue to work with UNIFIL to maintain calm, minimize and halt violations, look for practical localized solutions and build on what has been achieved by strengthening the liaison and coordination arrangements, including through the tripartite mechanism. The visible marking of the Blue Line continues to be an essential confidence-building activity that has helped to calm tensions in some areas. I encourage the parties to continue to work with UNIFIL in the ongoing process to mark the Blue Line in its entirety and to find practical localized solutions for problematic areas.

73. I am concerned that incidents that impede the freedom of movement of UNIFIL and endanger the safety and security of peacekeepers continue to occur. Some of the incidents can be explained by the inconvenience caused by the presence of a large military force operating within a civilian environment. Nevertheless, I am concerned that several of these incidents have included violent assault on UNIFIL personnel and some have shown an organized character. This casts doubt on the motives of those involved. The primary responsibility for ensuring freedom of movement to UNIFIL personnel in the area of operations lies with the Lebanese authorities. I call on the Lebanese authorities to take firm, resolute action against the perpetrators and to find ways to work with UNIFIL to strengthen the response and investigation into the incidents. Effective measures must be taken to curb and prevent all incidents that impede the freedom of movement of UNIFIL and endanger the safety and security of peacekeepers.

74. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the State continues to pose a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and stability, and contradicts the country's obligations under resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). The unforeseen consequences of the use of these arms are extremely serious for Lebanon should they provoke conflict. It is vital that the National Dialogue meet again to address issues of national importance, including the arms held by Hizbullah and other groups. The discussion paper on a national defence strategy developed in the context of the National Dialogue remains a valuable starting point in this regard. It remains important that earlier decisions of the National Dialogue be implemented, specifically those relating to the disarmament of the non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada.

75. The spread of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic along the Lebanese-Syrian border has had a deeply negative impact on the broader security situation. People living along the eastern Beqaa have been particularly affected. I strongly support the efforts of the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed there to maintain security and defend Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity and encourage ongoing bilateral efforts to strengthen that deployment along the length of Lebanon's borders. I further call on those holding Lebanese security forces personnel hostage to release them expeditiously. I deplore the shelling, shooting and aerial incursions into Lebanese border areas from the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the movement of armed fighters and war materiel between the countries. The lack of progress in delineating and demarcating the border between the two countries is no justification for violations of Lebanese sovereignty by any party. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and all parties fighting there to cease violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

76. I condemn the participation of Lebanese citizens in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic in breach of the policy of disassociation adopted by the Government of Lebanon and of the principles of the Baabda Declaration, which had been agreed by all of Lebanon's political parties in June 2012 and the importance of which was reaffirmed by the Security Council. I call on all Lebanese parties to cease any involvement in the Syrian conflict, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration and urge them to recommit to the policy of disassociation.

77. I condemn the terrorist attack in the Jabal Mohsen neighbourhood of Tripoli and sectarian rhetoric by all parties, which encourages such violence. I commend the people of the areas neighbouring Jabal Mohsen who rejected the attempt to restart further rounds of sectarian fighting in that area. That suicide attack and violence elsewhere around the country reflect the worrying proliferation of weapons outside the authority of the State, and in this regard I call on Member States to uphold their obligation under resolution 1701 (2006) to prevent the sale or supply of arms or related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon.

78. Continued broad political support is needed for the security and judicial authorities to combat impunity in respect of all acts of violence. The extension of the mandate of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which coincides with the tenth anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, is a reaffirmation of the commitment of the United Nations to the work of the Special Tribunal with the continued support and cooperation of the Government of Lebanon. The trial of the five individuals suspected of the attack that killed Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 21 other people is ongoing. That trial sends the message that impunity will not be tolerated.

79. I commend the Lebanese Armed Forces for their continued commitment and strong cooperation with UNIFIL, including through the strategic dialogue. The Lebanese Armed Forces and security services continue to play a critical role in preserving Lebanon's stability in the light of the multiple security challenges that the country continues to face in fulfilling its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006); enforcing security on the Lebanese-Syrian border; fighting criminality; and combating terrorism within the country. I regret the loss of life that the security personnel have sustained as they have undertaken these duties. I welcome the support of bilateral partners for the Lebanese Armed Forces and security services, both in terms of immediate assistance and the longer-term development of the Lebanese Armed Forces. In this regard, I welcome the finalization of the agreement for $3 billion of assistance from Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with France, and encourage progress in the delivery of this much-needed capability in view of the scale and scope of the challenges facing the Lebanese Armed Forces. I call on other international donors to provide assistance as a key element towards the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and other relevant Security Council resolutions.

80. I welcome the consensus that the Security Council has consistently demonstrated in support of Lebanon's security and stability and count on the Council's continued unity as key to preserving Lebanon from the impact of conflicts in the region and helping it to address current challenges. I also thank the participants in the International Support Group for Lebanon for their continued commitment to the three primary areas of support to Lebanon and their activities in this regard. I believe that the Group plays an important role in advocating for

assistance and mobilizing support for Lebanon at this difficult time for the country and I will ask my Special Coordinator to consult with partners on how the Group might best achieve these goals going forward, in the light of Lebanon's outstanding needs and challenges.

81. The launch of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan by Prime Minister Salam and the Deputy Secretary-General marks the first joint plan of the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon since the start of the war in the Syrian Arab Republic and serves to align United Nations and national priorities for Lebanon's stability. Lebanon received 54 per cent of the appeal for its needs in 2014. In the light of the unique scale and nature of the refugee crisis in Lebanon and its implications for the country's stability, I call on donors to respond generously, as a matter of urgency, to the appeal for $2.14 billion required under the Plan for 2015, including at the Kuwait donor conference to be held on 30 March.

82. I welcome the renewed commitment of the Palestinian leadership to disassociate the Palestinian camps in Lebanon from the violence in the region. I welcome Palestinian efforts on the ground to work with the Lebanese authorities to maintain order in Ein el-Helweh and elsewhere. The need to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, without prejudice to the resolution of the refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement, is ever more urgent, as the Palestine refugee camps are increasingly overcrowded as a result of the growing numbers of Palestine refugees displaced from the Syrian Arab Republic. I encourage donors to be forthcoming in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, including to enable it to effectively assist displaced Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic.

83. For both Lebanon and Israel, exploration and development of their respective offshore oil and gas resources is a national priority. During the reporting period, both countries indicated their wish to resolve the dispute over the maritime exclusive economic zone. I again encourage them to proceed with steps that would allow for resolution of this issue and reiterate that the United Nations stands ready to assist if both parties so request.

84. I strongly commend Prime Minister Salam for his leadership in working with the political leaders and Government of Lebanon to uphold national unity and ensure the continuity of State institutions. It is positive that the Future Movement and Hizbullah are engaged in dialogue and that tangible results are felt in the country in security terms and in lowering tensions. Nine months after the departure of former President Sleiman, I am increasingly concerned about the prolonged crisis around the presidential vacancy. The issue of ending the presidential vacuum remains vital for Lebanon's national unity and stability and for the country's standing regionally and internationally. It is therefore in the national interest that all parties show greater resolve and flexibility to elect a president and uphold the institutions enshrined in the Taef agreement.

85. Recent developments have again shown that the impact of events in the Syrian Arab Republic can seriously threaten stability in Lebanon. The perpetuation of the war in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the Golan, continues to harm Lebanon's security, political stability and economy. It therefore remains essential to find a political solution to end conflicts in the region and progress towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council

resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). This and the full integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon remain interdependent.

86. I wish to express my appreciation to all the Member States contributing military personnel to UNIFIL and Observer Group Lebanon. I commend the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander and the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL, as well as my new Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the staff of her Office, all of whom continue to play a critical role in helping to promote stability along the Blue Line and in Lebanon.